Topsfield Historical Society

Local Lore Newsletter

Collection

Local Lore

January 2015, Issue 114

The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

WEB Address (http://www.topsfieldhistory.org) Email: webmaster@topsfieldhistory.org

The Town Tavern

A public house or "ordinary" was an important part of any town, especially in Topsfield because of its location along the routes to Boston and Salem. In the town tavern travelers could overnight and local men could meet to transact business. In order to regulate the sale of intoxicating liquors and insure orderly conduct, the courts issued licenses to innholders.

The first tavern on record may have been located about where the entrance to the downtown plaza is today. In 1660 "Danyell Cleark was licensed to keep a house of public entertainment." Four generations of Clarks kept up the tradition, with every generation incurring occasional court-ordered lapses due to infractions such as "Selling half a pint of liquor to the Indians," "Provoking speeches," and "Prophane cursing and swearing and for breach of ye peace in striking Jesse Dorman."

When the Turnpike was built in the beginning of the 19th century, the Topsfield Hotel at the corner of the Turnpike and High Street was said to be the best tavern on the Eastern Stage route.

From History of Topsfield, Dow

Thanksgiving & Christmas

140 visitors braved the snow to warm up with hot cider, see John Burgess demonstrate the cider press, and experience the magic of an old fashioned Thanksgiving.

Nearly 80 revelers attended the Christmas party where they feasted on an expansive buffet while enjoying the talents of Vince Guerra on keyboard and a guest performance by Ed Jelinek (pictured) on his accordion. Special thanks to Audrey Iarocci and Carole Hoover and their team for organizing this event!

It's Never Too Late!

Send in your donation now to the Annual Appeal for much needed maintenance on the Gould Barn and Capen House!

Editor: Anne H. Barrett
Contributors: Norm Isler, Hannah Barrett

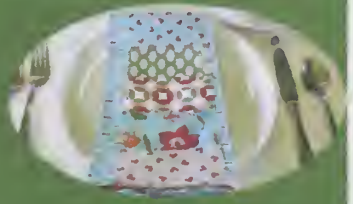
Upcoming Events

Golden Age of Silent Movies
January 11th, 3 PM

The Intrepid Captain Mugford
February 8th, 3 PM

Kid's Corner

By Hannah Barrett



Seasonally decorated ones, striped ones, fancy white ones, and polka dot ones which all come in convenient little packages for you and your guests to use, enjoy, and then simply throw away, no wash required. Paper napkins; I'm sure you have seen a lot of them over the holidays whether they were embellished with snowmen or a simple "HAPPY NEW YEAR!" Where did these marvelous festive little pieces of paper come from?

A man in England named John Dickinson of Dickinson Mill Company is said to have first introduced the paper napkin at a party in 1887. Dickinson's napkins were the first in Europe. He had special paper cutting machines, and some of his napkins were decorative. The Scott Paper Company, which had developed other paper goods such as towels, tissue, and toilet tissue, began printing paper napkins in the 1930s. These new paper napkins were very convenient compared to their previous cloth ancestors, and ensured that guests would have nice clean napkins.

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February 2015, Issue 115

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Salem Gazette, Aug. 7, 1846

For The Gazette

Mr. Editor,—I perceive by accounts in your and other papers, that the potato crop, in this and other countries, is affected with disease, so prevalent last year. From three years experience upon the different methods of raising this valuable root, I am convinced, that unless we cast off the new mode of its cultivation, the potato will become entirely extinct. I find that where the old mode of cultivation has been continued, there has been no trouble with the rot. I refer to the mode of earthing up the land. Where this is done, and has been continued for years, there is no trouble with the disease; but where the mode is adopted of keeping the ground level and not earthing it up at all, and where this mode has been continued for three or four years, the disease is prevalent.

If good seed be planted one year, and cultivated by keeping the ground level, the next fall the crop, will not be so good as the seed planted in the previous spring, for the disease has slightly injured it. The second year if the produce of the first be planted, the disease will plainly show itself. The third year the crop will be very much affected. The disease is not produced entirely in one year, but continues to grow upon the crop as time increases, with the modern mode of cultivating the land level, and with but very little earth upon the potato to protect it from the severe rays of the sun.

The earth is a preserver of the potato, if rightly managed, and the sun's rays are a sure poison, as anyone will perceive by exposing a potato to the influence of the sun for a day of two. For the protection of the potato it is necessary to have it well covered up with the earth. The severe hot rays of the sun and water that must stand on the land after a rain, where the ground is kept perfectly level, are sure to effect the potato, and then commences the disease. *(Continued on next page)*

If one of your New Year's resolutions was to support the THS maintenance campaign, send in your donation today!

Editor: Anne H. Barrett
Contributors:
Norm Isler, Hannah Barrett

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Intrepid Captain Mugford
February 8th, 3 PM

Annual Meeting & Supper
March 8th, 3 PM

Kid's Corner
By Hannah Barrett

There's nothing better than having a nice warm, soft flannel in a fashionable plaid print to throw on. Flannels have long been used as work shirts and have come in and out of fashion over the years; nowadays you see people of all ages wearing them in every season. Where did this classic article of clothing come from?

Hamilton Carhartt is credited with inventing the flannel shirt, which started out as a popular work shirt or pajamas/warm underwear. Flannel was first woven in Wales and Southwest England; it was cheap and warm and very quickly became popular. It became well known in America with the invention of the union suit in New York in 1869 and was standard men's underwear for cold weather.

During World War I flannel was used to make uniforms and bandages for battlefield medical posts. In the Great Depression men wore flannel shirts to whatever jobs they could get because they were inexpensive. This is how the flannel shirt got its lumberjack image; many laborers wore them. Flannel shirts are now worn by grunge rock bands and are a fashion icon popular with all age groups.

The Intrepid Captain Mugford

February 8, 3 PM

Gould Barn, Topsfield Common

Popular speaker and former Masconomet history teacher Donald Doliber tells the story of this Revolutionary War Hero, about whom George Washington aide Gen. Artemis Ward declared, "America owes its independence to Mugford." Come hear about his brave and daring deeds!

Sponsored by
Topsfield Historical Society
Free Admission Refreshments

Parking for the Gould Barn

As some of you may know, The Commons event venue has an agreement with the Congregational Church to use the Emerson Center parking lot during their functions. When there is to be an event at The Commons, attendees at Gould Barn functions may not park in the Emerson parking lot, but rather they should park along the Topsfield Common. Even if the parking lot is empty when you arrive, please do not park there.

In the announcement for each upcoming Society event, we will indicate whether or not you may park in the Emerson lot. Please adhere to the parking instructions for each event so as to avoid conflict with The Commons guests. On days when parking is not permitted in the Emerson lot, a reminder sign will be posted by the Gould Barn walkway and if you have parked in that lot, you will be asked to move your car. Carpooling is encouraged.

For The Intrepid Captain Mugford you **MAY** park in the Emerson lot.

(Continued from front page)

After considerable enquiry, I have found that those farmers in this vicinity who have never adopted the manner of keeping their land level, but who have always earthed up their potatoes, and have planted the potatoes so raised, have never had any trouble with their crop. Water should never stand for any length of time upon the potato, and in earthing up the hill it necessarily causes small dippers in the rows of potatoes, which hold the water and cause it to soak into the ground under the potato. If the water lay upon the potato, and it is but slightly covered with the earth, the extreme heat of the sun, with the water that must stand up on the potato, produce this disease which will destroy the crop in a few years, where the new mode of cultivation is continued.

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March 2015, Issue 116

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SPAM, Wonderful SPAM!

No one knows what the name of Hormel Food's SPAM® stands for. Some people say it means "shoulders of pork and ham." Others say it stands for "spiced ham."

During World War II, over 150 million pounds of SPAM were sent to the U.S. and allied armies on the war fronts. The ubiquitous meat was such an important part of the Russian soldier's rations that Nikita Khrushchev said "Without SPAM, we wouldn't have been able to feed our army."

The U.S. Government used so much SPAM because it was inexpensive, had a long shelf life, was nutritious, and could be transported easily. A Topsfield resident remembered having SPAM for Easter one year during the great war, as there was no ham available.

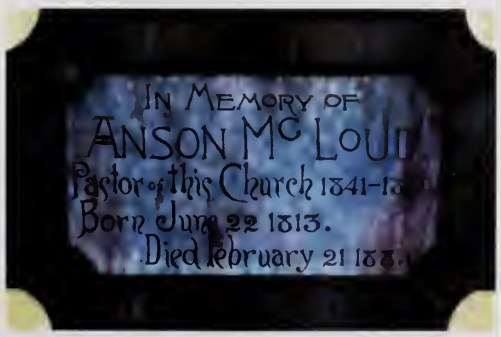
Editor: Anne H. Barrett
Contributors:
Norm Isler, Hannah Barrett

WHILE stained glass windows in Europe's cathedrals date back hundreds of years, stained glass in America boasts a history of less than 200 years. Early American churches were simply designed and had either plain glass windows, or in some cases, no glass at all, but rather shutters which could be opened when weather permitted.

The first figural stained glass window made in the United States is the "Adoration of the Magi" window, made for Christ Church, Pelham, New York, designed by William Bolton in 1843.

According to the *Historical Manual of the Congregational Church of Topsfield* published in 1907, "In 1891 the interior of the church was repaired and adorned at an expense of over $1,200, and memorial windows placed to preserve the name of beloved worshippers."

Among those memorialized was Anson McLoud, pastor there from 1841 to 1869. In addition to his pastoral duties, he served on the school committee, the committee to investigate the feasibility of establishing a library, and represented Topsfield in the State Legislature.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Meeting & Soup Supper
March 8th, 3 PM

The Lincoln Assassination
April 24th, 7:30 PM

Kid's Corner

By Hannah Barrett

Some say that the feeding of wild birds in America originated in 1845 when Henry David Thoreau fed birds at Walden Pond. The first commercially made birdfeeder was put on the market in 1926 and was designed for hummingbirds.

The first tube feeder was not invented until 1969 by Peter Kilham. Before this, people put out birdhouses filled with seed, but these special new feeders kept out unwanted visitors such as squirrels. The invention of the tube feeder made bird watching one of the most popular pastimes in the U.S. and millions were quickly sold. This simple but amazing invention brought wildlife to the kitchen window for many families. Today, more than 50 million Americans put out a billion pounds of birdseed per year.

FUN FACTS

A typical backyard bird weighs less than two nickels.

Birds consume 15% of their body weight overnight just keeping warm enough to survive.

Local Lore

April 2015, Issue 117

The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

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Masconomet

In the Spring of 1630 John Winthrop arrived in Salem Harbor aboard the flagship Arbella, one of eleven ships carrying 700 Puritan men, women and children, cattle and provisions. He carried the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony which gave birth to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Winthrop was met on board by Sachem Masconomet of the Agawam tribe who welcomed him, speaking in English which he learned nearly twenty years before from English visitors. His territorial limits extended from the sea to Will's Hill in what is now Middleton to the West, South to the Danvers River, the whole of Cape Ann and then North to the Merrimac River. His people had been decimated by a malignant disease in 1616, possibly Small Pox, that left his tribe estimated at less than one hundred when Winthrop arrived. Those remaining lived in fear of attack by the Tarrantines, their enemies from what is now the coast of Maine. The first Governor, John Endicott, had sent men to defend the Agawams when Masconomet heard rumors of an attack. Masconomet hoped that the new governor would also ally with his people. Masconomet was recognized early on as friendly to the settlers and officially sold the land of Ipswich to John Winthrop, Jr. in 1638 for twenty pounds.

Sachem Masconomet died about 1658 and was buried in the tradition of his tribe on Sagamore Hill in what is now Hamilton, the hill being named after him.

Editor: Anne H. Barrett
Contributors: Norm Isler, Hannah Barrett

Kimball Scholarship Deadline

The John Kimball, Jr. Memorial Trust is now accepting applications from history students or others who have excelled in and/or have a passion for the study of history and related disciplines and who reside in or have a substantial connection to Topsfield. Applicants may apply by submitting the letter of request form found at www.topsfieldhistory.org.

State is a Leader in Education

Established in 1837, the Massachusetts Board of Education is the oldest in the country. Governor Everett had recommended the establishment of such a board in his address to the 1837 legislature's opening session, saying, "While nothing can be further from my purpose, than to disparage the common schools as they are, and while a deep sense of personal obligation to them will ever be cherished by me, it must yet be candidly admitted that they are susceptible of great improvements."

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Lincoln Assassination

April 24th, 7:30 PM

CALL THE MIDWIFE!

A Look at Colonial Midwifery

May 8th, 7:30 PM

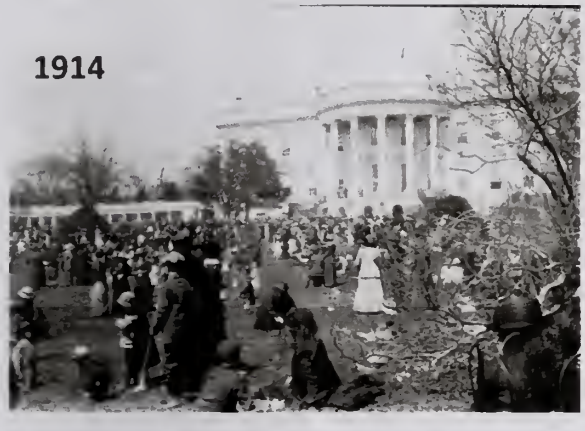
Kid's Corner

By Hannah Barrett

Today we have all kinds of special chemicals, pastes, and devices for your teeth. Amazing dentistry, X-rays, whitening solutions, toothpastes of all kinds, specially designed toothbrushes with built in tongue brushes, and electric toothbrushes that brush in a circular motion for you! We have advanced quite a bit from the "chew sticks" which were used since 3000 BC in ancient civilizations. These chew sticks were frayed twigs that were rubbed against the teeth to get them semi-clean. The first bristle toothbrush was invented in 1498 in China, made from coarse, stiff hog hairs with a bone handle. Mass production of these boar bristle toothbrushes in America did not start until 1885. These boar bristle toothbrushes were used until 1938 when "Doctor West's Miracle Toothbrush" with nylon bristles was invented. The first electric toothbrush came out in 1960 and went by the name "Broxodent."

The White House Easter Egg Roll

Beginning in the 1870s, Washington D. C. area families took part in an Easter Monday Egg Roll on the grounds of the United States Capitol. The event, which involves children rolling dyed eggs with a spoon, grew in popularity over the years, resulting in a great deal of wear to the Capitol's landscaping. With an already inadequate budget to complete the landscaping and maintenance of the grounds, Congress passed a law forbidding the Capitol grounds from being used as a children's playground. The law was to be enforced in 1877, but that Easter Monday rain poured down, canceling any outdoor activities.



On Easter Saturday of 1878, a small announcement in the local press informed potential egg rollers that the new law would be enforced. President Rutherford B. Hayes, taking his daily walk, was approached by a number of young egg rollers who inquired about the possibilities of egg rolling on the South Lawn of the White House. Unfamiliar with the activity, President Hayes, upon his return to the White House, inquired amongst his staff who briefed the attentive Chief Executive. The smiling President issued an official order that should any children arrive to egg roll on Easter Monday, they were to be allowed to do so. That Monday, as children were being turned away from the Capitol grounds, word quickly spread to go to the White House!

President Hayes and his wife, Lucy, officially opened the White House grounds to the children of the area for egg rolling that Easter Monday. Successive Presidents continued the tradition, and the event has been held on the South Lawn ever since. The event has been canceled on occasion only because of poor weather conditions and during World War I and World War II. Over the years Presidents and First Ladies have personally greeted the egg rollers as have members of the Cabinet, athletes, musicians, celebrities from film, television, and theater and the official White House Easter Bunny. At the end of the day as egg rollers say goodbye, each receives a special presidential wooden egg complete with the signatures of the President and the First Lady.

Source: clinton2.nara.gov/WH/glimpse/Easter Library of Congress Photos

THS Annual Meeting Notes

The March 8th Annual Meeting was opened by President Norm Isler who pointed out that 2014 was a good year for the organization, both from an accomplishments and financial standpoint. Program Director Vince Guerra reviewed the past year's slate of interesting speakers and promised an equally robust schedule for this year.

Highlights from Barn Functions Chair Amy Coffin's report included over 125 events with more than 20 having fees waived, a way in which our tax exempt organization gives back to the community. A website containing the barn's history, photos and policies enables potential users to learn about renting the barn prior to visiting.

Great progress has been made by Director and Technical Advisor Bill Whiting on the Digital History Project which will make our historical records available on line. An agreement has been reached with the Boston Public Library to digitize the Society's records at no charge, a significant accomplishment.

Kimball Scholarship Program highlights were reviewed by Trustee Norm Isler who shared that, since the start of the program in 2004, 71 grants have been awarded totaling $203,097.

Accomplishments were then reviewed including establishment of the Leslie S. & Hope Ray Memorial Trust for the care/maintenance of the Society's properties. Contributions to the Ray and Kimball Trusts are encouraged.

The meeting concluded with a soup supper arranged by Hospitality Chair Pat O'Connor.

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May 2015, Issue 118

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Topsfield's Stone Walls

This year there will be a unique opportunity to see firsthand the building and repair of a stone wall at the Strawberry Festival on June 13th, as Will LeRoyer demonstrates his craftsmanship on the Parson Capen House property. As we drive or walk along Topsfield's byways, we're barely aware of the stone walls proclaiming silent testament to generations past, yet according to Tom Wessels in his book *Reading the Forested Landscape*, closer inspection can tell us much about the who, when and why of the walls' origins. Wessels' book points out that walls containing smaller stones most likely surround land that was once used for cultivation; each year, over the winter the fallow land would produce a fresh crop of stones through the freeze-and-thaw process, and those often smaller stones would be removed in the spring and added to the surrounding wall. Conversely, the well-developed root systems of land meant for grazing or holding livestock prevented small stones from continuously surfacing, thus the surrounding stone wall would be comprised of larger rocks.

While you're enjoying the Strawberry Festival be sure to stop by and see Will's progress throughout the day and learn more about this ancient craft.

Editor: Anne H. Barrett
Contributors:
Norm Isler, Sarah Barrett

Photo by Kindra Clineff

WWI Casualty

Topsfield's only WWI casualty was John Joseph Farrell, born in Salem in 1889. He moved to Topsfield when he was five and lived in town until he entered the service at Georgetown on June 27, 1918. He worked as a stone mason for Connelly Brothers Construction Company which is still in business today in Beverly. Bradley Palmer contracted the company in 1918 to build stone walls on his estate, some of which Farrell might have worked on just prior to his enlistment.

He was sent to Camp Dix in New Jersey and after a short period of training went to France as a private with Company A, 312th Engineers, 87th Division. The 312th Engineers worked on docks and ammunition warehouses, and built a railroad station as well as numerous barracks and mess halls. They operated a stone quarry and three gravel pits which may have been where Farrell worked based upon his civilian experience. He died of lobar pneumonia at Base Hospital No. 12 on February 26, 1919 and his body lies in the American Military Cemetery at Beau Desert, France.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CALL THE MIDWIFE!
A Look at Colonial Midwifery
May 8th, 7:30 PM

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL
June 13, 10 to 4

Kid's Corner

By Sarah Barrett

When I think of summer, I think about sunglasses. My eyes are sensitive to the sun, so I take my sunglasses with me wherever I go. Who invented sunglasses? It turns out that many different people from around the world came up with the idea. Inuit people wore sunglasses made out of flattened walrus tusks to block the rays of the sun. A Roman emperor wore sunglasses made of polished gems while he watched gladiator fights. In China, judges wore sunglasses made of quartz crystal to both protect their eyes from the sun and to hide their facial expressions so that people could not see what they were thinking or feeling in court. In the 1700s and 1800s, sunglasses tinted in different colors were created for people with certain diseases or bad vision. In the 1900s, the use of sunglasses became more popular, especially with Hollywood movie stars. In 1929, sunglasses were mass-produced because everyone had to have a pair!

Local Lore

June 2015, Issue 119

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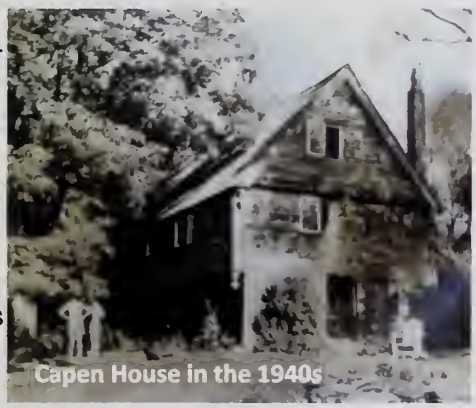
WWII Evacuee Visits Old Home

In 1940 nine-year-old Ian Rose boarded a train in London bound for Liverpool, waving goodbye to his parents as the train pulled out. He would not see them again for five years. Thus began the story that Ian shared when he visited the Parson Capen House this past May.

Ian's parents had applied to have their son sent out of London to escape the war-time bombings. In all, 3.5 million people, mostly children, were evacuated, some to the English countryside, and others overseas. After arriving in Liverpool, Ian's group transferred to a ship bound for Canada. According to Ian, it was rumored that the boat was accompanied part of the way by a Navy ship, to provide protection from German U Boats in the area. Upon arrival in Montreal, the children were sent by train to Boston, and then transferred to the Wellesley College campus, where they were cared for by the students there until local families came to claim them.


Capen House in the 1940s

Elmer and Caroline Foye had been married only a few months when Elmer announced that he wanted to take in one of the children. They selected Ian and he came to live with them at the Capen house where the Foyes were caretakers. As he related his story, Ian choked up at fond recollections of how good they were to him, and how much he learned from them. Eventually he returned to England, but he kept in touch with his foster family, and never forgot the kindness and compassion shown to a small boy so far from home.


The Foyes


Ian Rose Today

UPCOMING EVENTS

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL
June 13, 10 AM to 4 PM

Doll Tea
August 26th, 2 to 4 PM

Songs of WWII
September 11, 7:30 PM

Tour of Patton's Heroes' Fields @ Greenmeadows Farm & Luncheon
September 16, 10 AM

Kid's Corner

By Hannah Barrett

I recently took a cooking class in Rome and learned more about olive oil and balsamic vinegar than I ever knew there was to know. Balsamic vinegar takes eighteen years to age and be ready to use. It was tradition for Italian families to make a new batch of balsamic vinegar whenever a baby girl was born. This way, when the girl turned eighteen and was of age to marry, she would take the balsamic vinegar to her husband and his family as an offering for their marriage. Balsamic vinegar originated in Modena, Italy, which continues to be a main producer. The first historical reference of balsamic vinegar dates all the way back to 1046 when a bottle was given to the new Roman Emperor Enrico III of Franconia. Balsamic vinegar has been prized in Italy for hundreds of years, and I enjoy it often in my pasta sauce!

Editor: Anne H. Barrett Contributors: Norm Isler, Hannah Barrett

Local Lore

September/October 2015 Issue 120

The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

WEB Address (http://www.topsfieldhistory.org) Email: webmaster@topsfieldhistory.org

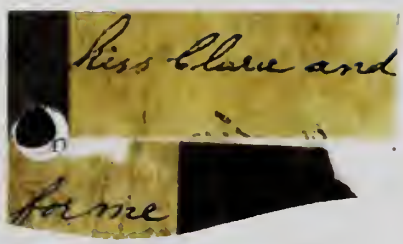
SALEM GAZETTE.

July 21, 1874

Died in Topsfield, July 5, 1874, Mr. Zaccheus Gould, aged 84 years, 5 months, 17 days. This event has thrown into deep affliction an extensive circle of children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, with other numerous connections more or less nearly related. His loss will be deeply felt in the community where he was so long a resident. He was universally respected. As an affectionate husband, judicious parent, kind neighbor, good citizen, and constant attendant on divine worship, he was a model for others to follow.

Mr. Gould was descended in the sixth generation from Zaccheus Gould, the earliest recorded settler of Topsfield, in 1643. Many of his ancestors have been distinguished for personal bravery, patriotism, virtue and intelligence. He was the son of Zaccheus and Anne (Brown) Gould, born Jan. 19, 1790,the fifth of ten children. His baptism occurred, Feb. 28th, 1790. He was then only forty days old. It is said that his parents hasted to present him so that he would be the first child baptized by their young, new minister, the Rev. Asahel Huntington, ordained 22d November previous. In repeating the story, Mr. Gould used to say that he himself was so young at the time as not to recall the fact with certainty. However it may be as to Mr. Gould's baptism being the first administered by Mr. Huntington, it is certain that his marriage to Anne Hood on November 2d, 1812 was the last solemnized by that clergyman previous to his own death. The sixtieth anniversary of this wedding was celebrated Nov. 2, 1872, when a large company of descendants, relatives and friends met at the old family mansion to congratulate the aged couple on the auspicious occasion.

(continued next page)



Check out "Kiss Clara for Me" at www.topsfieldhistory.org to see a Civil War Soldier's letter home to his mother in Topsfield, and learn the whole story.

Editor: Anne H. Barrett Contributors: Norm Isler, Sarah Barrett

Welcome to the first edition of the new, semi-monthly Local Lore newsletter. Beginning with this issue, Local Lore will be published every two months in this larger format. Enjoy!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Songs of WWII
September 11, 7:30 PM

Tour Patton's Heroes' Fields
September 16, 10 AM

Hell Before Breakfast
October 16, 7:30 PM

Halloween Witches Roost
October 25, 2 PM

Ernest Hemingway Alive!
November 13, 7:30 PM

Capen House Thanksgiving
November 26, 10 AM to 12 PM

DID YOU KNOW that the Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896 is considered to be the shortest war in history? In 1893 Britain declared Zanzibar a protectorate of its empire and installed their own 'puppet' Sultan to look after the region. He ruled for three years, but upon his suspicious death, his cousin took power without British approval. The British demanded that he step down, and when he refused, they attacked. There were 500 Zanzibar casualties but only one British. The Sultan escaped out a back entrance. The war was over in 38 minutes.

Zaccheus Gould (cont'd)

Mr. Gould retained his physical and mental vigor to near the last, and his accurate knowledge of the local history of the town was quite remarkable. He was accustomed to relate the following reminiscence of Mr. Huntington and his young bride coming to town, some seventeen months after his ordination. They came to Topsfield on horseback. It was known that they would spend the night before their arrival at the famous Bell Tavern, then in Danvers. Here they were met by a large delegation from Topsfield, also on horseback, the ladies in silks and the gentlemen in the best their wardrobes afforded. Mr. Gould remembers his mother's silk dress, so firm of texture as almost to stand if not to walk alone. Mrs. Huntington felt deeply mortified at meeting so finely dressed a company, since her husband wore his second best and somewhat seedy suit, while she had on a gown of her own spinning, weaving and fitting.

The cavalcade galloped into town and up to the parsonage, a fine old mansion now occupied by Mr. Jacob Kinsman. Here the party formed in two ranks, on either side of the way, through which the bridal pair were to reach the door. Jacob Kimball, of musical fame, acting as voluntary master of ceremonies, assisted the bride to dismount, and was the first to salute her with a kiss of welcome and escort her to the well-furnished table within.

The minister and his accomplished wife were highly beloved and respected by their parishioners. The only known exception was the quaint Henry Bradstreet. He killed off his hens, and with an oath gave his reason. It will be borne in mind that Mr. and Mrs. Huntington were from Connecticut. Mr. Bradstreet took umbrage at his fowls, because, as he said, they fell so far into the Topsfield fashion as not even to lay an egg without the whole brood setting up the everlasting chorus, "Connecticut, cut, cut, cut, Connecticut."

From Topsfield Historical Collections

JAMES OTIS, the eldest son of Col. James and Mary (Allyne) Otis, was born in Barnstable, Mass., Feb. 5, 1724-5. He graduated from Harvard University in 1743, read law, and was admitted to the Plymouth bar. He practiced in Plymouth two years, and then removed to Boston where he soon rose in his profession, acquiring a large and important practice and a reputation for learning, eloquence and integrity.

In 1760, he held the office of advocate-general of the colony of Massachusetts Bay. When the first application for writs of assistance were requested to be granted to revenue officers, warrants giving them a general power to enter houses and stores where it might be suspected that contraband goods were concealed, violating the dearest principles of the Magna Charta, Otis refused to appear for the crown, and resigned his office.

The merchants of Salem and Boston heard of it, and they engaged him to make their defense. The trial occurred in Boston, and Otis was between four and five hours in making his comprehensive and exhaustive argument. No cause in Colonial jurisprudence had excited greater public interest, and the courthouse was crowded. Without fear or fee, he then and there declared the great postulate which became the basis of all subsequent resistance to kingly domination, that taxation without representation is tyranny. He thrilled every heart with his powerful declamation and invective, and this maxim became the watchword of every patriot.

John Adams, who was present, in describing the scene, said that "Otis was a flame of fire; with a promptitude of classical allusions, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events and dates, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance of his eyes into futurity, and a rapid torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried away all before him. The seeds of patriots and heroes were then and there sown. Every man of an immensely crowded audience appeared to me to go away, as I did, ready to take up arms against writs of assistance. Then and there was the first scene of the first act of opposition to the arbitrary claims of Great Britain. Then and there the child Independence was born." *From the Essex Antiquarian, Volume III, 1899*

Local Lore

November/December 2015 Issue 121

The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

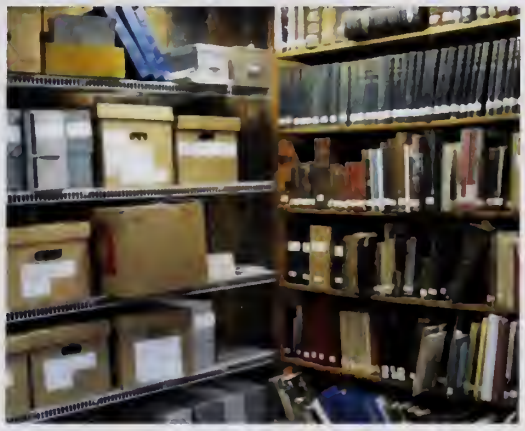
WEB Address (http://www.topsfieldhistory.org) Email: webmaster@topsfieldhistory.org

DONATE NOW!

The age-old adage "a picture is worth a thousands words" could not be more true when it comes to the condition of the Gould Barn roof (right). **Yikes!** A contractor has begun work, and we would like to raise as much of the funds needed to complete the project as possible, to minimize drawing down our available Society funds. Please help us keep this community treasure in the good repair that it deserves. Send in your contribution to THS, P.O. 323, Topsfield MA 01883. **Thank You!**

Digital History Online Project

by Jeanne Pickering



If you or one of your children have ever researched Topsfield's history, then you may know that for over a hundred years Topsfield Historical Society members have researched town history and published the results in a series of books known as the Historical Collections. The entire set of Collections can be found at the town library and in our Gould Barn archives.

Searching thirty-four volumes is not so easy though, and only a portion of the volumes are available online. Additionally, you'd still have to search through each volume separately (Google does not index them), not an easy task for anyone and a daunting one for a student.

This is why THS launched a new Digital History Online project to make online searching much easier. The project has two initial phases. First, the Boston Public Library, under a grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and at no cost to the Society, is digitally scanning the entire Collections and will be uploading them to www.archive.org. (cont'd)

EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Ernest Hemingway Alive!
November 13, 7:30 PM

Capen House Thanksgiving
November 26, 10 AM to 12 PM

Christmas Party
(Members Only)
December 13th, 5 PM
(Note Date Change)

Slavery in Topsfield & Massachusetts
January 17th, 3 PM

THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

A huge "Thank You" to the following Parson Capen House guides who opened the house and welcomed visitors throughout the summer: Bill Power, Pat & George O'Connor, Wendy & Russell Thatcher, Peggy & Edward Roaf, Ed Roman, Irina Gunzel-Guerra, Susan Winship, Sean Ward, Meg Philpott, Boyd Jackson, Leslie Voss, and Kathy Lindquist. **We couldn't do it without you!**

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1897, cough syrup maker Pearle Bixby Wait of LeRoy, New York trademarked this gelatin dessert... which his wife Mary called Jell-O.

Editor: Anne H. Barrett Contributors: Jeanne Pickering, Alison D'Amario, Hannah Barrett

Digital History Online Project (continued)

Second, the Society is creating a new overall subject index of the volumes under a 2015 Partnership Grant from the Essex National Heritage Commission. Called "Topsfield History Online," the subject index will cover all the volumes and link directly to them. For example, if you're looking for information about Topsfield soldiers in the Revolutionary War, there will be links to any articles on that subject that are contained in the Collections.

Eventually the Topsfield History Online website will serve as a one-stop search tool for searching most of the available material on the history of Topsfield which is presently scattered among many websites. Future stages of the project include digitizing and providing online access to material still only available in the Society's physical archives. If you would like to know more about this project, email Bill Whiting at historicalrecords@topsfieldhistory.org.

First Woman Astronomer

Maria Mitchell was born to Quaker parents William and Lydia Mitchell in 1818 on Nantucket, where she received her early education. Quakers believed in educating their sons and daughters.

Mitchell's father encouraged her interest in astronomy and taught her how to use a telescope. She worked as the first librarian at the Nantucket Athenaeum library from 1836 to 1856, all the while still gazing at the night sky, studying solar eclipses, the stars, Jupiter and Saturn. In October of 1847 while scanning the skies, 28-year-old Mitchell discovered what she was sure was a comet. It turned out what she had spotted was in fact a new comet and it became known as "Miss Mitchell's Comet."

In recognition of her important discovery, Mitchell was presented with a gold medal by Frederick VI, king of Denmark, who had an amateur interest in astronomy. Consequently, Mitchell became the first professional female astronomer in the United States.

The breakthrough brought Mitchell respect and recognition among astronomers and other scientists, and in 1848, she became the first woman to be named to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Society Members Tour Green Meadows Farm

Recently members of the Topsfield Historical Society enjoyed a tour and luncheon at Green Meadows Farm on Asbury Street in Hamilton. After a tour of the fields, named for heroes of the Vietnam War and variously planted in vegetables, fruit and flowers, the group enjoyed a lunch of locally sourced organic food as guests of Joanne Holbrook Patton, widow of Major General George S. Patton.

The couple took over the farm from Mrs. Patton's in-laws, Major George S. Patton and his wife Beatrice. In 1980 the younger Patton retired and moved with his family to the property. Once on the farm, he declared, "This property has been leisure land long enough" and decided to make it into a "community asset," first growing blueberries on the once-fallow land before branching out into other crops.

General Patton never forgot his military career, and when he retired he was "still deeply and sentimentally attached to the military life he had left." He had served in Korea, commanded the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the Blackhorse Regiment in Vietnam, and had previously commanded the Second Armored Division, as had his father in World War II. As a way to remember his soldiers, he named seven fields of his farm after "those whose heroism was most meaningful to him." Each field has a sign commemorating a hero and there is an information sheet at the farm stand describing each man's valor. *Sourced from a Tri-Town Transcript article by Alison D'Amario*

Kid's Corner

By Hannah Barrett

It's that time of year again, the autumn chill is moving in and the sweaters are coming out. At the end of a long cool day I like to warm up my chilly nose and finger tips with a nice hot cup of tea, fresh from the pot with it's convenient handle and spout, short and stout...wait a minute, where did this marvelous piece of pottery originate? The teapot was first created in China during the Yuan Dynasty in the 13th century. Before the Yuan Dynasty people would make tea in cauldron-like pots over a fire. The historic Chinese teapot was small, designed to serve one person, and one drank from the spout. At the end of the seventeenth century when tea and porcelain teapots were shipped to Europe from China, only the Chinese knew how to manufacture porcelain, making it particularly desirable. Tea drinking in Europe was reserved mostly for the upper class at first due to how costly it was to import. Later on in Colonial America teapots were crafted from silver, in Boston especially, which was the epicenter of silver production. Some of the well-known families in the Boston silver market at the time were Edwards, Burt, Hurd, and Revere. That's right, Paul Revere, the famous midnight rider, made silver teapots!